THEODORE R. GOODWIN

DEATH VALLEY FORTY-NINERS' TWENTY-NINTH ANNUAL ENCAMPMENT

THEODORE R. GOODWIN

T. R. Goodwin

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Three Views

by

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ADVENTURER AND MONUMENT BUILDER

Ardis Manly Walker

IT MAY BE SAID that a full life is shaped in a many-faceted mold of interests; with its quality maintained through the courage to exercise strength of character. On this basis, it would be appropriate to assess the life and amazing exploits of the late T. R. Goodwin, first superintendent of Death Valley National Monument.

His life began in 1877 in the Connecticut village of Norwich. His early interests began to appear in Providence, Rhode Island, where his family settled during his tender years.

The spirit of adventure which animated his life was to project him into many avenues of activity. While resident in the little city of Providence, he came under the spell of the sea and seafaring which ignited an energetic response in the heart of this adventuresome youngster where he shaped a career in yachting which was to bring him international honors, including a Lipton Cup.

As president of the Narraganset Bay Association, Goodwin had joined with Thomas Fleming Day and Fred B. Thurber in planning an ocean voyage in his little 25-foot yawl that would make seafaring history. The Providence *Journal* of June 11, 1911 reported that Theodore R. Goodwin, Fred B. Thurber, and Thomas Fleming Day compose

the crew which will handle the *Sea Bird* on a trip of 2200 miles to the Azores, and from there to Rome, about 1800 more. The fortunes of the crew were followed by the press all the way across the Atlantic.

It was during his years in Providence that Theodore R. Goodwin experienced a glimpse of a different field of adventuring that excited his active mind. It was his first sight of a Twenty-mule Borax team on parade in Providence. It aroused in him a deep interest in the West.

In subsequent years he became active in desert road construction. In an area scarce in substantial road-building materials, he invented a process whereby an oil mixture could be added to the material of the roadbed itself to come up with a usable road.

This experiment came to the attention of State Senator Ed Fletcher and other San Diegans who were trying to promote the idea of a transcontinental highway which would terminate in San Diego. When the Goodwin construction invention became known, the "powers that be" prevailed upon the State Highway Department to hire Goodwin to conceive and build the road across the sand dunes from Imperial Valley to Yuma over a course first spanned by planks and railroad ties that had shattered and merged with the sand dunes under the traffic of the new automobiles.

This was a time when the National Park Service was having a difficult time pioneering roads into its wide domain in California and the Southwest. Because of his success in constructing roads under conditions faced by the Park Service, he was hired to take charge of road and building repairs for the Service at Crater Lake. From there

he was transferred to Casa Grande in Arizona and other expanding National Park areas.

About this time, Death Valley National Monument was established. Still intrigued by the color of romance that a 20-mule team had projected to him in far-away Providence during his yachting days, he wrote Director Horace Albright asking that he might be transferred to Death Valley. He recalled later, "The Park Service had no appropriated funds with which to develop the area." However, the newly formed Civilian Conservation Corps needed projects so Goodwin was appointed "engineer in charge" and arrived in Death Valley with two companies of CCC boys in the month of October to take over his responsibilities.

Goodwin said, "Those CCC boys did all the work and did it well!" He added, "We installed more than 500 miles of roads, 175 miles of them paved. We built the National Park Village and headquarters and the station in Wildrose Canyon for summer operations. All that time Federal money was scarce. If we hadn't had the CCC companies, it could not have been done."

Goodwin seemed to serve in all capacities where everything seemed to be temporary as he worked in an auxiliary capacity under Colonel White, Superintendent of Sequoia National Park. In 1936, however, his outstanding services were rewarded when he was named Superintendent of Death Valley National Monument.

Twenty-five years later, reporter Don Ashbaugh, writing of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Monument, wrote of Goodwin, "One man in the entire world knows the story completely. He is T. R. Goodwin.

He was Uncle Sam's top man there for 21 years, from October 1933 until his retirement in 1954. It was Goodwin who supervised all of the Park Service construction and development which transformed the primitive desert area into a tourist's paradise."

On the occasion of his retirement, Goodwin's name made the headlines and the ensuing articles gave full credit to the long and tedious labors he expended in the building of Death Valley National Monument, a monument suitably symbolic of his life and labors.

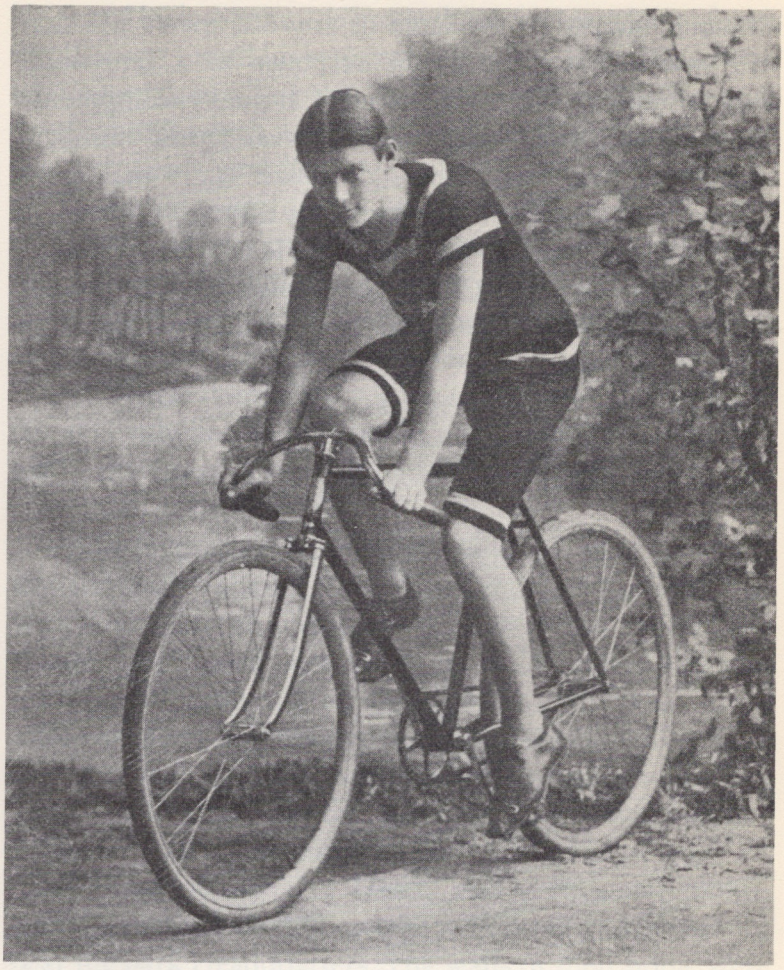
One article dated July 14, 1954, recounted, "T. Raymond Goodwin spent his youth at sea, but he sought out one of the driest spots in the world to make sure he would amount to something."

While helping with plans for staging a "49er" celebration in Death Valley, I found him a tough, wiry little man with a quiet, retiring exterior through which showed the sturdy, sun-tanned personality he had acquired through the years adventuring in desert places. It was not until after we had brought our centennial celebration to a glorious close that I became more intimately acquainted with Theodore R. Goodwin, the man, and the remarkable life-pattern he had carved for himself.

As Superintendent of Death Valley National Monument he shared a modest cottage with Neva and the family near the park Headquarters. The walls of their home were decorated with the exquisite art of his brother Phillip R. Goodwin, famous wildlife artist of the turn of the century and of its '20s and '30s; art which stirred my spirit when I viewed it in large calendar prints as a youngster.

In retrospect, it is hard to conceive of any social phe-

nomenon shaped to the mold of any one man's life that will ever surpass the public response to a centennial pageant, and an unbroken series of annual encampments that have inspired thousands. Each year untold numbers of visitors move over the old Indian trails that were pioneered into modern thoroughfares through the tireless dedication of Theodore R. Goodwin. He who had followed the stormy course of Christopher Columbus had finally discovered his own new world in the valley whose name is Death.



Goodwin as a cycling champion

ENGINEER AND ADMINISTRATOR

Horace Albright

RAY GOODWIN was superintendent of Death Valley National Monument from 1936 to 1954. He retired following recovery from injuries suffered in a serious accident in Death Valley while on active official duty. He was assigned to Death Valley Monument in 1933, a few months after the reservation of the area by a proclamation of President Herbert Hoover. His duties were generally in the engineering field with special attention to the rebuilding and the maintenance of the extensive desert road system.

While employed in the Reclamation Service in Yuma, Arizona, Goodwin accidently discovered a method of cheaply surfacing roads, by using any fair grade of oil on any untreated road surface, mixing the oil and the dirt or gravel in proportions he developed in research and experimentation. He proved that a substantial, dust-free surface could be made that would have lasting qualities, thus saving money in maintenance and greatly improving the enjoyment of motoring.

In the 1920s, roads in the national parks of the West, for the most part, were gravelled, but still unsatisfactory for comfortable travel, because of the dust and the tendency to become "washboardy" and rutted. As Assistant Director it was my job to be on the lookout for methods to improve the road system and also for the men to accomplish the task. Sharing this responsibility with me at the

National Park Service employees' first season, 1933-1934, Death Valley National Monument, California. T. R. Goodwin sixth from left, front row. Photo by Frasher's

HEADQUARTERS
BUILDING
DEATH VALLEY
NATIONAL MONUMENT

time was Chief Engineer Frank Kittredge. In California, both from Kittredge and State officials, I learned of Goodwin's method, and as soon as he could be spared, we "borrowed" him from the California Division of Public Works. I well remember his arrival in Yellowstone Park and undertaking the improvements of our wholly unpaved road system. For decades, over 100 miles of this park's road system had been sprinkled with water twice a day.

When Goodwin started the oiling of our roads in Yellowstone, I followed his work closely. One day as I took Dr. Hermon Bumpus, our museum expert and adviser to the Union Pacific terminal at West Yellowstone, we had to travel over a section of road being treated to the Goodwin oil process. Going into the washroom at the railroad station on our arrival there, Dr. Bumpus noted that one side of my face was spotted with dark "freckles." I noted at once that the opposite side of Dr. Bumpus's face was darkly freckled. We wondered why. Of course, we had been lightly spattered with some of Ray Goodwin's oil, before he could mix the surface gravel with it. I recalled then that a foreman tried to stop us, presumably to warn us, and we splashed through without heeding him.

My acquaintance with Ray, in his Yellowstone days, was necessarily brief, but in our first meeting, I was impressed with his pleasing personality and his obvious technical skill and thereafter held him in high esteem and respected and liked him. Leaving Yellowstone at the end of 1928 for the directorship in Washington, I saw Ray Goodwin rarely—only long enough a few times to cordially greet him—but I did not forget him.

Shortly after the establishment of Death Valley Na-

tional Monument the Civilian Conservation Corps was created. Two CCC camps of 200 men each were set up in Death Valley. I was already thinking of Ray Goodwin as the engineer of the new monument with its many miles of dirt roads, most of them utterly unfit for motor traffic. Chief Engineer Kittredge was doing more than just thinking of Goodwin; he was tentatively arranging for his transfer to the Conservation Corps for Death Valley service, and he was employed as soon as the two camps were in course of construction. Goodwin had made trips to Death Valley, and had once met Director Stephen T. Mather at Barstow and had expressed the hope that this great desert area might some day be a part of the national park system.

Ray Goodwin was an ideal superintendent. He and his family loved the area, and were always undaunted by the heat of summer. He was a fully qualified flier and owned a plane which he used in inspection and rescue work. He soon knew the old prospectors of the deserts and the Indians.

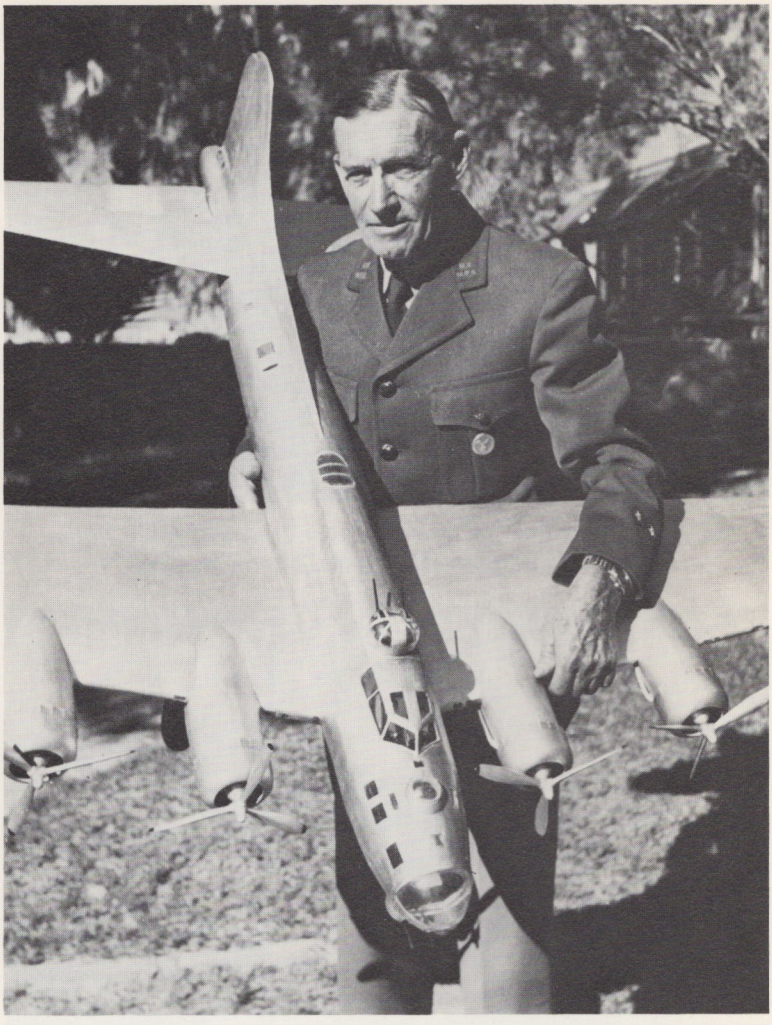
In 1954, the Secretary of the Interior, the late Douglas McKay, cited Ray Goodwin for Meritorious Service in an eloquent recital of his achievements in 25 years of "exceptional Government Service." Director Conrad L. Wirth gave him a life pass to the National Park System with words of admiration and appreciation. Director Wirth also paid tribute to him in a detailed statement of his career in a meeting of his Washington staff on May 27, 1934.

Because of his personal devotion to desert country and its resources, his friendship for its inhabitants, his engineering and administrative expertise, he was indeed a

most capable and successful superintendent. His retirement from the Park Service was a loss of far more than ordinary significance. Living in Las Vegas, to the age of 92, he never lost his interest in Death Valley, nor wavered in his loyalty to the Service.

Goodwin with Governor Warren, '49er President Andy Noon, and Phil Townsend Hanna at Centennial, 1949

T. R. Goodwin with the plane he owned and flew in Death Valley. Photo by Don Downie



T. R. Goodwin with model plane he presented to General Hap Arnold

FRIEND AND CRAFTSMAN

Ron Miller

IN THE EARLY YEARS of the Monument, if anyone could have been called "Mr. Death Valley" it would have been T. R. Goodwin. His wife, Neva, recalls, "He loved it. He walked every little ridge and rill of Death Valley and just loved it."

T. R. is responsible for the Monument's early development, including over 500 miles of roads. Neva fondly remembers the building of the road to Beatty:

> That first spring, when we went out, Ray was so anxious to get the Mud Canyon Road done, he decided to make his own preliminary survey so he could put it in for work in the fall. It was May and hot. We picked up a lot of slats, red flags, water, the two children, and lunch. I drove the pickup and he went ahead staking. Then I'd catch up with him and he'd take another stake. That's one road the whole family surveyed.

One of Ray's early assignments as head of the CCC crews in the Valley was to construct a laundry and trading post for the small band of Shoshone Indians who, having neither a reservation nor governmental aid, had been living in primitive and crude brush shelters at the waterholes in the area. Adobe bricks were made by the crew on the site and construction was begun.

One morning he rose at 5 a.m. and found old Johnny Shoshone sitting on his back wall staring at the project. Ray knew he had something on his mind, so he asked Neva to make up two plates and a pot of coffee, and joined Johnny on the wall for breakfast.

"Who live in those houses down there?" Johnny asked.

"Indians," was the reply.

"No Indians live there," answered the chief. "Doors don't face East."

The doors were changed and construction continued, but the next morning there sat Johnny on the wall.

"Who live in those Houses down there?"

"Indians."

"No Indians live there." No opening to take the body of dead out."

The necessary resealable wall opening was put in. After many such field changes by T. R. the village was completed and occupied.

The Indian agent suggested that the crew support the Indians by using their laundry. This proved to be expensive, since each week the cost rose fifty cents.

Matt Ryan was there as a mechanic in those days and recalls:

> The Goodwin years were a challenge and inspiration for those who worked with him. We all knew his unwritten requirements of performance were impossible to attain, but his enthusiasm kept all of us "kickin and scratchin" to please him, because somehow he conveyed to us his determination to share his love of Death Valley with everyone.

Goodwin receiving from Chester Doty, on behalf of the Death Valley Museum, the gun carried across Death Valley in 1848 by Doty's grandfather

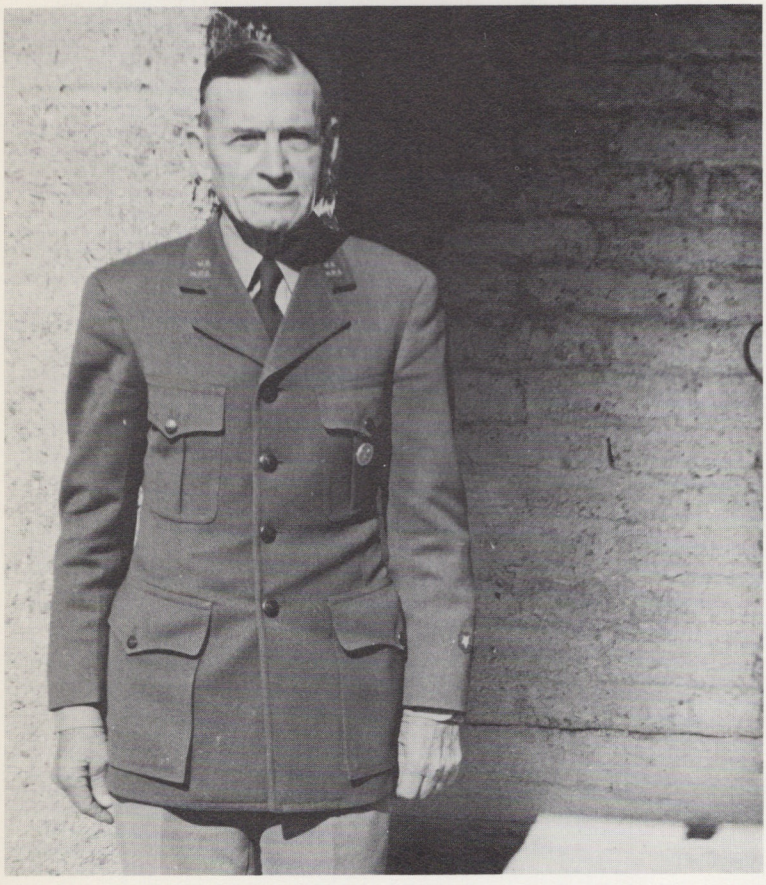
He insisted that local Indians be looked after and that the land owner's rights be respected.

Goodwin's extreme dedication caused a preoccupation that resulted in his brushing elbows with someone without so much as a good-morning, but when a human need came to his attention, all resources at his command—even his own pocketbook—were theirs. No visitor, employee, or resident of Death Valley who was in need went without.

Sailboats on Furnace Creek? Yes, with T. R. even that was possible. Delighting his own, and other children of Death Valley, he often borrowed moments from a rigorous day to sail his model boats. His interest in model building probably went back to his days at Narragansett, where he designed sailboats. An experienced pilot, he also constructed models of airplanes. One of his favorites, a B-29, he gave to General Hap Arnold, who had earlier been in charge of the CCC. This model always hung in his old friend's office.

T. R. built what may have been the world's hottest model railroad, located in his garage at Death Valley. He often ran the sixteen by thirty-four foot layout in 130-degree temperatures.

Among Ray's closest friends was Death Valley Scotty; these two developed a mutual respect over the years. Scotty was always welcome in the Goodwin home at Cow Creek Ranger Station and would regularly stop in on his way home from Los Angeles.

Even in retirement T. R. kept busy. Moving to Las Vegas, he renewed his interest in boating, while continuing his hobby of model building.

It is difficult to sum up the essence of a man like T. R. in a few paragraphs. A descendent of Mayflower Pilgrims, Revolutionary War Veterans, and Gold Rush Pioneers, T. R. was an adventurer, designer, inventor, engineer, naturalist, craftsman, and administrator. One might simply say he was Death Valley's modern Renaissance Man.